

1960

Caronia: Cunard Steam Ship Co.

Bern Keating

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Recommended Citation

Keating, Bern, "Caronia: Cunard Steam Ship Co." (1960). *Typed Narrative and Caption Notes*. 7.
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Howard Weitzman

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*1607 East 50th Place
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THE CARONIA, largest ship built especially for cruising, arrives at Kingston, Jamaica. In foreground is the terrace

of the Myrtle Bank Hotel, where the ship's cruise director, Vaughn Rickard, will bring the passengers for luncheon.

Pursers must be on call twenty-four hours a day.

ing institution known as the Auction Pool, in which bets are taken on how many miles the ship will cover in a day. (Winings are sometimes large. One winner of the *Queen Elizabeth's* Auction Pool collected \$14,000.)

Not all passengers care for games of chance, deck sports, dancing, or the ship's other recreational offerings. The one sport that just about all of them do participate in and enjoy is eating.

A well-supplied table has always been the purser's trump card. As Chief Purser Bob Gehrig of the *United States* puts it: "You can give them entertainment twenty-four hours a day, but if you haven't got a good kitchen, you're out." Adalbert Paluka, one of the *Queen Frederica's* two chief pursers, agrees. "Happiness," he says, "begins from the stomach."

Flexible Menu

Whatever a passenger's dietary needs—kosher, diabetic, salt-free—the purser makes it a point to have the proper foods for him. Not long ago, a man who had booked passage on the *United States* wrote that he liked a particular brand of English biscuits. They were served to him his first day out at sea. On the same ship, the Duke of Windsor once requested a certain brand of bitters. This brand is now included on the list of supplies.

Since all food is included in the price of passage, some passengers have a field

day trying out unaccustomed luxuries. Now and then, they even order caviar for breakfast. "If they order caviar for breakfast, they get it," one purser says. "But of course," he adds, with the certitude of a man who has spent a lifetime distinguishing the sheep from the goats, "they're the very ones who would never have caviar at home."

. . . And the Kitchen Sink

A transatlantic liner carries the most staggering quantity and bewildering variety of foods to be found almost anywhere in the world. Before a recent crossing, the *United States* took aboard:

- 84,000 eggs
- nearly a ton of live lobsters
- \$4,000 worth of caviar
- 2 tons of grapefruit
- 6 tons of fish
- 26 tons of beef
- more than 30 tons of fresh vegetables
- 5,066 bottles of champagne
- 5,498 bottles of Scotch
- 23,123 bottles of beer.

The *United States* also offers exotic items like snails, truffles, bird's nest soup, and kangaroo tail soup—in fact, any dish under the sun, from *tournedos "Rossini"* to corned beef and cabbage.

Lionel Carine, chief purser of the *Queen Elizabeth*, boasts that in the twenty-two years since his ship was launched its kitchens have been found wanting only

once. This was when a whimsical passenger asked for "a whale sandwich—the cut just behind the shoulder." The request was soberly relayed to the chef who, just as seriously, sent word that the gentleman would have to accept a substitution.

A problem pursers would rather not talk about, but which confronts them from time to time, is the matter of stowaways. Throughout seagoing history, people seeking free passage have been hiding in lifeboats, in the hold, or simply remaining on deck and trying to behave like paying passengers. In inventiveness and imagination, today's stowaways are second to none. And the purser, as nautical police officer, is often hard put to discover them.

Last January, the *Queen Frederica* had a stowaway who, for sheer ability to bluff, outranks them all. He came aboard in Italy, with several pieces of luggage, and confidently established himself in an empty stateroom. At dinnertime, he donned a well-tailored tuxedo and ascended to the dining room. Unable to produce a dining card, he was asked to see the purser.

"He came in very angry," Chief Purser Paluka says. "He claimed we had embarrassed him and owed him an apology. He gave his stateroom number. I checked and found the cabin was unsold. We put him ashore at Gibraltar, still highly indignant."

Conscientious Ex-Employee

Not so well dressed, but even more convincing was one of the *Queen Elizabeth's* recent stowaways. "He had been a steward for us not long before," says Tom Hilderley. "So, when he came aboard, he simply slipped on his white jacket and reported to the pantry. For some time he went around saying, 'Your tea, madam,' like a regular steward. Then someone said, 'Didn't that fellow sign off two or three voyages ago?' We checked and, sure enough, he had."

The stowaway to end all was a Lithuanian lady who boarded a New York-bound vessel and simply sat on deck reading a book while the ship steamed out to sea. Two hours later she confronted the purser with a portentous announcement: "The pains have come. I'm going to have a baby."

She was as good as her word. A short time later, the ship had a new passenger—one that could hardly be put ashore at the first port of call. When the mother and her new daughter were returned to the country where she had boarded the



MOORE-McCORMACK'S ELEANOR BRITTON considers ships romantic settings, admits that, as cruise director, she played Cupid "more than once."

ship, they had become great favorites with everyone, and the passengers had even raised two hundred dollars for them. "How can I ever thank you?" the mother said to the purser as she departed. "The free hospital . . . and this money. . . . You've been so wonderful to me, all of you."

"We were glad to do it," he said. Then, coming as close to actual rudeness as a purser can, he added, "But please don't send your friends."

An Atlantic crossing is one thing; a cruise is quite another. On a cruise, passengers are aboard for the entire round trip, and shipboard life itself is expected to be the main source of fun. Accordingly, the purser's role as host is taken over by a specialist known as the cruise director. The purser continues as banker, police officer, and payer of bills, but all matters of diversion, from shuffleboard tournaments to shore excursions, from cocktail parties to crossing-the-line ceremonies, are under the aegis of the cruise director. His sole responsibility: to see that the voyage is fun, fun, fun, from the moment the first streamers snap until the day the boat arrives back at its home port.

Buffet Before Lunch

A cruise director tries to have one or more planned activities going every minute. He considers it the highest form of flattery when a passenger complains, as did one on the *Caronia*: "Look, I think you should change the eating schedule. You have the deck buffet at twelve-thirty and then lunch at one. I have a hard time making them both."

The cruise director often has a sizable staff which may include: an assistant cruise director, one or more hostesses, a bridge expert, a dance team, a photographer, a sketching artist, a lecturer, a language professor, and one or more shore excursion managers. With their help, he plans bridge tourneys, gymkhanas, audience participation stunts, and floor shows—often inspired by the countries to be visited. On a Moore-McCormack cruise to South America you can brush up on your Spanish or take tango lessons; on a Matson Lines cruise to Honolulu you can learn to hula and attend a Hawaiian costume party; on the Home Lines' *Queen Frederica* you can attend a "Taverna Night," with waiters in Greek costume and a menu of flavorful Peloponnesian dishes.

No matter how varied the schedule, there are always a few passengers who defy the most carefully laid plans to keep them entertained. One director encountered his personal Waterloo at an African port of call. "We scheduled a shore excursion to the diamond mines at Kimberley," he says. "I thought that would be one thing everybody would enjoy. But two passengers came to me and said: 'We don't want to look at mines. We



COSTUME PARTIES are a big favorite with cruise passengers. Above are Mr. and Mrs. Howard Weitzman, of Chicago, who honeymooned on the *Caronia*.

came to get away from mines. We're from Pennsylvania."

A more common source of difficulty for cruise directors—one for which there is often no solution—is the quest for shipboard romance. Thousands of stories, poems, and plays have been written about the magical possibilities of a meeting at sea. Hundreds of women buy tickets in the hope of just such a meeting. They are usually disappointed because, as Chief Purser Lawrence Lopez of the *Santa Paula* puts it: "When a woman saves her money she takes a trip; when a man has saved some money, he buys an automobile."

This is a diplomatic way of stressing the statistical fact that, on cruises, women outnumber men two to one. "On the first night out," one cruise director says, "most of the eligible bachelors are staked out as the property of an equal number of women. The women who come in second complain. It is a problem I have never been able to solve."

Nevertheless, a percentage of women do find romance on the high seas. Eleanor Britton, director of entertainment and cruise staffs for Moore-McCormack, is a staunch believer in the possibilities of shipboard encounters. "A husband or wife doesn't come with every ticket," she says, "but some people are lucky."

"I Did Something . . ."

Before becoming a shoreside executive, Miss Britton spent eight years as a cruise directress; some of her real-life experiences rival the TV exploits of Gale Storm. Has she ever played Cupid? "Indeed I have," she says. "I remember one woman who took a Mediterranean cruise with us. She was seated at a table of women and met no one else. She told me she was

going to leave the ship at Gibraltar unless I *did* something. I induced her to stay aboard and had her transferred to my table. I told the steward: 'Put a man at our table—any man.' That night she found a nice widower seated beside her.

"Jane hooked him," she concludes. "It turned out they lived in the same city, only two blocks apart. But they wouldn't have met if they hadn't taken the cruise."

"You Hardly Noticed Her"

A single man, faced with the large number of attractive women on a cruise, may find it difficult to choose among them. Once, Miss Britton met a young bachelor who had been with her on a recent voyage. "You may be interested to know," he told her, "that Mary and I are going to be married."

"You mean the same Mary who roomed with me?" Miss Britton asked.

"Yes."

"But you hardly noticed her! I don't think you danced with her once."

"Well . . ." the young man replied sheepishly, "I didn't get around to her till I got home."

Sometimes a man and woman who meet aboard ship ask to be married by the captain during the voyage. Usually this cannot be done. The reason: both must present papers proving that they have never been wed or are legally divorced.

Shipboard romances, however, have triumphed over greater obstacles than this. "We had one girl," Miss Britton says, "who took a cruise to South America and fell madly in love with a handsome Argentinean. He left the boat without broaching the subject of marriage, but the girl was determined to see him again. She worked for an international cosmetics house and, when she got home, she asked

(continued)

One host's record: 190 parties on a single voyage.

to be transferred to 'a Spanish-speaking country.'

"They transferred her all right—to Ecuador. She waited a few months, asked for another transfer, and got it—to Venezuela. This went on for five years. They kept moving her from one Latin American country to another, but the closest she ever got to Argentina was Chile. Finally, she simply quit and, with no job and very little money, took a freighter to Buenos Aires."

The comedy of errors was not yet ended. "The day they docked, she was strolling on the deck, which was wet. She slipped and fell, breaking both legs. Her Argentinian beau was waiting on the pier, but she didn't exactly make a glamorous entrance. She was carried ashore with both legs in casts. This was one romance, though, that *nothing* could spoil. They are now happily married."

No Time for Romance

Despite Miss Britton's blonde good looks and magnetic personality, her duties with Moore-Mac have left little time to seek romance for herself. She has had tributes paid her in every part of the

world (songs written about her in Trinidad, a drink named for her in the Fiji Islands), but she finds that "a good cruise director has no time for personal romance. If she pays too much attention to one man, other women on the cruise get jealous. And, like most sailors, she is never in port long enough to establish an attachment."

Travel Tips

For enjoying your voyage—with or without romance—Matson Line cruise directors offer these tips:

In deck sports: Even if you're a natural athlete, don't win all the competitions. Let others share the glory.

In entertaining: Repay your obligations. Women can reciprocate by tossing a cocktail (or tea) party.

On the dance floor: Men should dance occasionally with women other than their wives. Ladies will have their chance at tag-your-man dances.

If you want to be alone: Find a deck chair, a good book, and when you see someone coming, pretend to be dozing.

In conversation: Don't tell all your jokes the first day. Be a little mysteri-

ous—make people curious about you. But smile—don't scare them off.

Busiest cruise director in the business is Vaughn Rickard of the *Caronia*. As head of fun and festivity on the world's largest year-round cruise ship, he has a personal staff of twenty-five, and an eighteen-hour-a-day social schedule that makes Elsa Maxwell look like a stay-at-home.

Rickard is well on the way to becoming the champion cocktail-party-giver of all time. When the *Caronia* is at sea—ten months of every year—he not only plans and attends hundreds of affairs given by passengers, he also gives two cocktail parties a day in his own suite, one at noon and the other at 5 P.M. This month, when the ship returns from its annual ninety-five-day world cruise, he will have given, on this voyage alone, one hundred and ninety cocktail parties.

With all this practice, has he discovered a surefire formula for successful entertaining? "It's best to have small groups," he says. "Not more than twenty-five people. But each group is different and, when it comes to specifics, I believe in playing it by ear. The only 'must' is music. I always keep the hi-fi playing. With music, people can talk privately—about the other guests, if they like—without fear of being overheard. Once—just once—I gave a party without music. Everybody talked in whispers. . . ."

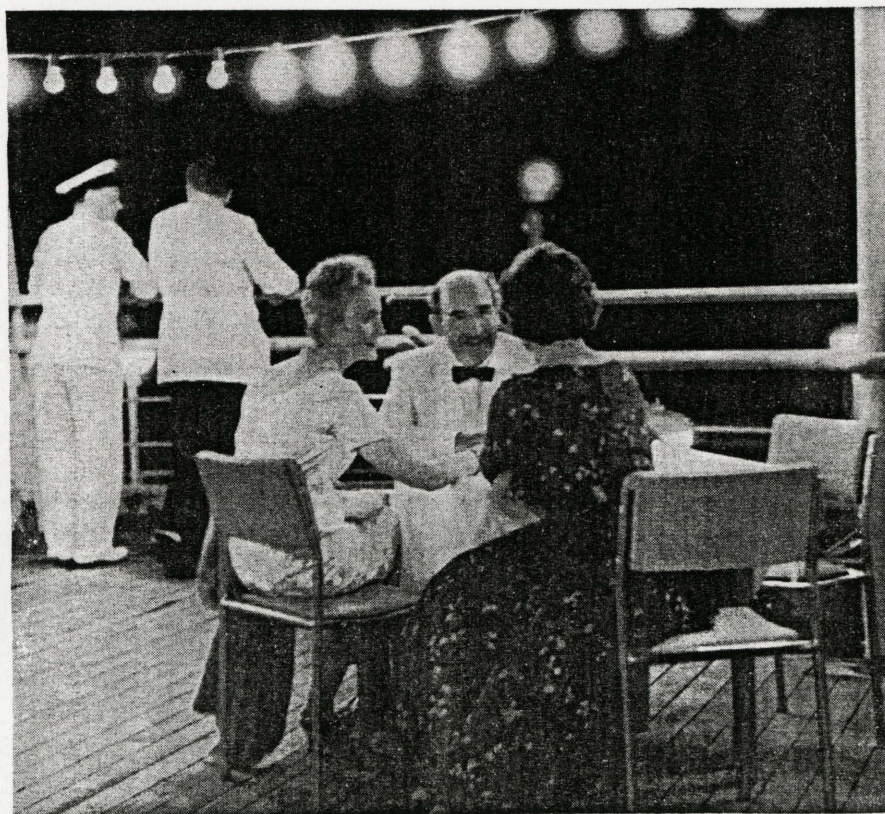
White Elephants

The longer the cruise, the more time passengers spend shopping at various ports. To make sure they don't get bilked by foreign merchants, the cruise director makes up a list of recommended places to buy. Even so, some passengers get sick of their purchases before the voyage ends. For this folly, the cruise director has an effective answer: the white elephant sale.

Shortly before the voyage ends, he becomes auctioneer for an afternoon, selling pottery, brassware, fezzes, saris, and pairs of pointed slippers (both lefts).

Sometimes he sells things that *weren't* bought in foreign ports. "Some passengers sell their going-away gifts," one cruise director says. "We even had one woman who sold her clothes. She claimed she had put on so much weight during the cruise that she couldn't wear them any more."

Long cruises often cross the equator, giving the cruise director a chance to stage the biggest powwow of all—"crossing the line" ceremonies, which, according to the tradition of the sea, trans-



LATE-HOUR PARTIES are a daily event during cruises. The purser and the cruise director stay up with the happy revelers, sometimes not retiring till 4 A.M.

form nautical greenhorns into "shell-backs," or veteran sailors.

The ceremonies consist of a hazing—usually a mock "head shave" followed by a dunk in the swimming pool—and, in the evening, a ball in honor of the initiates. To make things more fun, the cruise director, captain, and staff captain dutifully allow themselves to be hazed along with the rest. "We don't exactly enjoy it," one of them ruefully admits, "but our job is to please the passengers. And they dearly love to see us get the business."

Since the duties of a ship's host include everything from being thrown into the pool to throwing a stowaway into the brig, the job would seem to require a dazzling array of special skills. Actually, it is more a matter of intuition than training. A French Line official says, "No one can really teach you how to be a purser. Beginners have to pass quite a few exams, and that takes some studying, but the job is essentially a blend of tact, manners, instinct, and resourcefulness."

Most chief pursers began by working for a steamship line on shore. Bob Gehrig of the *United States* is a typical example. "I always wanted to go to sea," he says. "I started in a job on land. Then, when I was finally assigned to a ship, they told me, 'If you get seasick, we'll get another boy for your job.' I *couldn't* get seasick." Of such determined optimism are good pursers made.

All the Ship's a Stage

Cruise directors are a different matter. Many of them have been in show business or related fields and have taken their jobs as a logical step toward the goal of keeping people entertained.

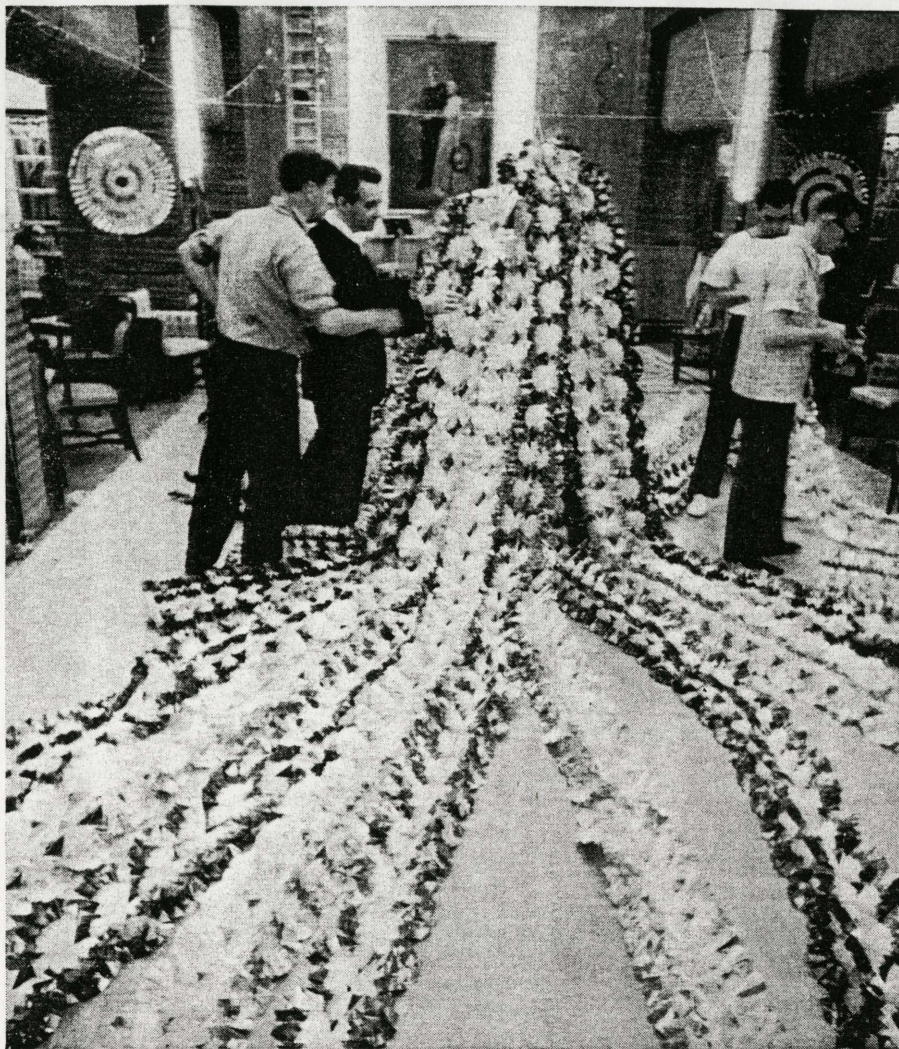
Vaughn Rickard, for example, studied to be an actor. Danny Leone of the *Brasil* and Louis De Mangus of the *Argentina* both began as ship's vocalists. Eleanor Britton was chosen Miss New Jersey in 1932 and won a trip to Europe. She swapped it for nine trips to Bermuda. "In the next few years," she laughs, "I was in Bermuda so much I lost my secretarial job. There was nothing to do but make a profession of traveling."

Does the role of ship's host, with its continual round of gaiety, ever pall? "Not long ago some of our pursers on the *Queen Elizabeth* decided they had had it," Tom Hilderley says. "They were sick of parties. They couldn't wait for a holiday ashore—alone. They were going to take long, solitary walks. They were going to hide in hotel rooms and become twenty-four-hour recluses."

"Then the holiday arrived and what did they do?"

He smiles, with that understanding of human nature which marks every successful purser. "Wouldn't you know it?" he says. "They called each other up and threw a party."

THE END



VAUGHN RICKARD (second from left) inspects decorations for the Caronia's Red and Gold Ball. He designs them and has them made up while ship is at sea.



PASSENGERS who find it inconvenient to go to the dining room may have lunch at the Caronia's deck buffet. Swimmers may come in their bathing suits.

keating caronia captions one

shot 1

Vaughn Rickard meets the early morning deck hikers after their health walk and with jocund manner says "Now that you have built up your constitution with a hike, let me tear it down with a drink." He offers coffee, pastries, bloody maries and champagne cocktails, all at 10 am.

shot 2 and 3

A Kingston Jamaica taxi driver has charged some cruise passengers six dollars to drive from the dock to the Glass Bucket for the calypso show. The cruise passengers refused to pay and the driver is trying to get Rickard to force them to pay. Rickard says "Like hell, I paid only \$1.50 myself to get up here and my job is to protect the passengers, not you."

shot 4

A glass bottom boat in Nassau going to Paradise Beach. Mr. Rickard is in background.

shot 5 and 6

Decorating for the Red and Gold ball. These decorations go up and come down in minutes and the lounge is kept free all the time.

keating carenia two

shots 8, 9 and 10

on the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ last afternoon out in the lounge the cruise staff holds a "White Elephant Sale" at which passengers who have been indulging in an orgy of buying at free ports put up for auction strange objects which they now cannot understand why they bought. The proceeds go to the crew's welfare fund.

The little boy is Roger Schachtel, sone of Mr. and Mrs. Irving Schachtel of 885 Park Ave. He is going along with a gag that Rickard always puts o n. A big package is brought out and the auctioneer offers a mystery object for sale.

Bidding shoo ts up, in this case to \$500, and everybody gets very excited about what could it be. Then when the bidding stops at some outrageous figure, the boy po ps out and it turns out that it was his parents who were doing the bidding. Everybody laughs like crazy.

shots 12 and 13. 101, 102 ✓

On e of the most important functions of the cruise director is the intimate little cocktail party for specially invited gu ests in his own cabin. Eventually, 8specially on a longer

keating -- caronia cappiens three

cruise, everybody gets an invitation, but the specialness of the party and the intime atmosphere carefully preserved just knocks the customers out. They love it. The letters on the wall are cut out of paper and several alphabets are preserved so that any city can be honored with a special party for the residents thereof at any time. All guests at this party were from Pittsburgh or nearby and oddly enough most of them met the others for the first time in this cabin. A big effort is made to keep the guests moving and meeting each other at these parties.

shot 14

Native coin diving from the lighter which plies back and forth at Nassau. That is the Nassau waterfront in the background. The hotel is the Royal Colonial.

sheet 15

The Caronia 's own launches on the deck at Kingston. Rickard takes the first one ashore, hangs about until most of the passengers have lauded, then comes back early to supervise some of the returns and stays till the last launch.

keating carenia four

shot 16, 17 18 19 20

Going back and forth on the lighter at Nassau and on the deck with members of the cruise staff and with passengers asking questions. The ship in the background is the Mauretania, of the Cunard Line, which happened to be in Nassau at the same time.

Shots 21, 22 23 24 25

Views of the Carenia in Kingston Jamaica. The table is on the terrasse of the Myrtle Bank Hotel where most of the cruise passengers had lunch. Launch pictures are on the Carenia's launch.

Shots 26 and 27

Shots at the captain's table on Gala night. The captain is Staff Captain J. Woelfingdon who represents ~~the~~ Captain F. G. Watts in all administrative duties.

shots 28 29 30

Rickard is always working one jump ahead of the actual schedule.

In Kingston he went to the Glass Bottom night club to

keating -- cāronia five

preview the dancing of the troupe of Rupert Dusuzay
and his Limbo Dancers, with the idea of hiring them
to entertain the round-the-world passengers on the
upcoming cruise.

shot 31

At Nassau Rickard calls on an old friend, Maude
Owen Marsh, who runs a decorating ~~xxxx~~ and furniture
shop, who was persuaded during this visit to make one
of the ~~xxxx~~xtours later this year.

shot 32

An important function of the cruise director is to
introduce every one of the many functions in the theater.
Here he is introducing a variety show.

shot 33, 34, 35

Masquerade party. The scotchman is Mr. Willard Cranshaw
of London, who owns a bus line. The doctor's setup
is actually of a bunch of doctors from Louisville, Ky.

shot 36 37 38

Sunbathing is a religious rite almost.

keating -- carenia six

shots 39 40 41 42

For sports enthusiasts there are many facilities.

Prizes of course for all winners of deck tennis, ping pong,

etc., and pictures by the ship's photographer to memorialize

the occasion. The man swimmer is a full-time instructor.

shots 43 44 45 46 47

The crew puts on boxing matches for entertainment and a

collection is taken up among the passengers for sports

sports equipment for the crew.

shots 48 49 50 51 52 53

More masquerade party. The transvestite and the girl

adjusting his brassiere are honeymooners named

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Weitzman of Chicago. They were

almost the only really young couple aboard.

shot 54

Passengers bet on the day's run in miles. The captain

makes an estimate, and then a spread of estimates is

posted and passenger's buy chances for 50 cents.

shots 55 56 57 58 59

keating carenia seven

Rickard attends a daily meeting with ship's officers to air complaints, suggest new policies, and exchange information. In this particular conference, the discussion was about estimated time of arrival and lightering arrangements at Nassau.

Capt. Woelfindon sits on the arm of a chair in shot 59, and

Capt. F. G. Watts is the central figure.

shot ~~xx~~ 58 is of a cruise staff meeting in Rickard's cabin.

shot 60

4 am in the Raleigh Room and Mr. and Mrs. Walter Allegood sing and play. He is a record manufacturer and a spectacularly good piano player of the most advanced progressive jazz type.~~xx~~

shot 61 is made late at night in a pantry on the promenade deck where tea and coffee and other light refreshments are maintained for late walking passengers.

shot 62 and 63 are of Mr. and Mrs.

of Montreal and Amsterdam, made late at night on the Verandah Cafe deck where late dancing and snacking goes on until small hours.